

CHAPTER 1.3.3.

EVALUATION OF VETERINARY SERVICES

Article 1.3.3.1.

The quality of the *Veterinary Services* depends on a set of factors, which include fundamental principles of an ethical, organisational and technical nature. The *Veterinary Services* shall conform to these fundamental principles, regardless of the political, economic or social situation of their country.

Compliance with these fundamental principles by the *Veterinary Services* of a Member Country is important to the establishment and maintenance of confidence in its *international veterinary certificates* by the *Veterinary Services* of other Member Countries.

The same fundamental principles should apply in countries where the responsibility for establishing or applying certain animal health measures, or issuing some *international veterinary certificates* is exercised by an organisation other than the *Veterinary Services*, or by an authority or agency on behalf of the *Veterinary Services*. In all cases, the *Veterinary Services* retain ultimate responsibility for the application of these principles.

These fundamental principles are presented in Article 1.3.3.2. The remaining factors of quality are described in Part 1 (notification, principles of certification, etc.) and the document entitled “Guidelines for the evaluation of Veterinary Services” included in Chapter 1.3.4.

The quality of *Veterinary Services* can be measured through an evaluation, whose general principles are described in Articles 1.3.3.3. and 1.3.3.4.

Article 1.3.3.2.

Fundamental principles of quality

The *Veterinary Services* shall comply with the following principles to ensure the quality of their activities:

1. Professional judgement

The officials personnel of *Veterinary Services* should have the relevant qualifications, scientific expertise and experience to give them the competence to make sound professional judgements.

2. Independence

Care shall be taken to ensure that *Veterinary Services'* staff personnel are free from any commercial, financial, hierarchical, political or other pressures which might affect their judgement or decisions.

3. Impartiality

The *Veterinary Services* shall be impartial. In particular, all the parties affected by their activities have a right to expect their services to be delivered under reasonable and non-discriminatory conditions.

4. Integrity

The *Veterinary Services* shall guarantee that the work of each of their officials personnel is of a consistently high level of integrity. Any fraud, corruption or falsification shall be identified and corrected.

5. Objectivity

The *Veterinary Services* shall at all times act in an objective, transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

6. General organisation

The *Veterinary Services* must be able to demonstrate by means of an appropriate legislation, sufficient financial resources and effective organisation that they are in a position to have control of the establishment and application of animal health measures, and of international veterinary certification activities. Legislation should be suitably flexible to allow for judgements of equivalence and efficient responses to changing situations to be addressed efficiently, and the incorporation of animal welfare and food safety measures. In particular, they shall define and document the responsibilities and structure of the organisations in charge of the animal identification system, control of animal movements, animal disease control and reporting systems, epidemiological surveillance and communication of epidemiological information.

A similar demonstration should be made by *Veterinary Services* when they are in charge of veterinary public health activities.

The *Veterinary Services* shall have at their disposal effective systems for animal disease surveillance and for *notification* of disease problems wherever they occur, in accordance with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Code*. Adequate coverage of animal populations should also be demonstrated. They shall at all times endeavour to improve their performance in terms of animal health information systems and animal disease control.

The *Veterinary Services* shall define and document the responsibilities and structure of the organisation (in particular the chain of command) in charge of issuing *international veterinary certificates*.

Each position within the *Veterinary Services* which has an impact on their quality shall be described. These job descriptions shall include the requirements for education, training, technical knowledge and experience.

7. Quality policy

The *Veterinary Services* shall define and document their policy and objectives for, and commitment to, quality, and shall ensure that this policy is understood, implemented and maintained at all levels in the organisation. Where conditions allow, they may implement a quality system corresponding to their areas of activity and appropriate for the type, range and volume of work that they have to perform. The guidelines for the quality and evaluation of *Veterinary Services* propose a suitable reference system, which should be used if a Member Country chooses to adopt a quality system.

8. Procedures and standards

The *Veterinary Services* shall develop and document appropriate procedures and standards for all providers of relevant activities and associated facilities the implementation and management of animal health measures and international veterinary certification activities. These procedures and standards may for example relate to:

- a) programming and management of activities, including international veterinary certification activities;
- b) prevention, control and notification of disease *outbreaks*;

- c) risk analysis, epidemiological surveillance and zoning;
- d) inspection and sampling techniques;
- e) diagnostic tests for animal diseases;
- f) preparation, production, registration and control of biological products for use in the diagnosis or prevention of diseases;
- g) border controls and import regulations;
- h) *disinfection* and *disinfestation*;
- i) treatments intended to destroy, if appropriate, pathogens in animal products,

ii) standards for registration of slaughter establishments.

Inasmuch as the OIE has adopted standards on these matters, the *Veterinary Services* shall comply with these standards when applying animal health measures and when issuing *international veterinary certificates*.

9. Information, complaints and appeals

The *Veterinary Administration* shall undertake to reply to legitimate requests from *Veterinary Administrations* of other Member Countries or any other authority, in particular ensuring that any requests for information, complaints or appeals that they may present are dealt with in a timely manner.

A record shall be maintained of all complaints and appeals and of the relevant action taken by the *Veterinary Services*.

10. Documentation

The *Veterinary Services* shall have at their disposal a reliable and up-to-date documentation system suited to their activities.

11. Self-evaluation

The *Veterinary Services* should undertake periodical self-evaluation especially by documenting achievements against goals, and demonstrating the efficiency of their organisational components and resource adequacy.

A Member Country can request the Director General of the OIE to arrange for an expert or experts to assist in the process.

12. Communication

Veterinary Services should have effective internal and external systems of communication covering administrative and technical staff levels and parties affected by their activities.

13. Human and financial resources

Responsible authorities should ensure that adequate resources are made available to implement effectively the above activities.

Article 1.3.3.3.

For the purposes of this *Terrestrial Code*, every Member Country shall recognise the right of another Member Country to undertake, or request it to undertake, an evaluation of its *Veterinary Services* where the initiating Member Country is an actual or a prospective importer or exporter of *commodities* and where the evaluation is to be a component of a risk analysis process which is to be used to determine or review sanitary measures which apply to such trade.

Any evaluation of *Veterinary Services* should be conducted having regard to the OIE Guidelines for the evaluation of *Veterinary Services* presented in Chapter 1.3.4. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

A Member Country has the right to expect that the evaluation of its *Veterinary Services* will be conducted in an objective manner. A Member Country undertaking evaluation should be able to justify any measure taken as a consequence of its evaluation.

Article 1.3.3.4.

A Member Country which intends to conduct an evaluation of another Member Country's *Veterinary Services* shall give them notice in writing. This notice should define the purpose of the evaluation and details of the information required.

On receipt of a formal request for information to enable an evaluation of its *Veterinary Services* by another Member Country, and following bilateral agreement of the evaluation process and criteria, a Member Country should expeditiously provide the other country with meaningful and accurate information of the type requested.

The evaluation process should take into account the fundamental principles and other factors of quality laid down in Articles 1.3.3.1. and 1.3.3.2. It should also take into consideration the specific circumstances regarding quality, as described in Article 1.3.3.1., prevailing in the countries concerned.

The outcome of the evaluation conducted by a Member Country should be provided in writing as soon as possible, and in any case within 4 months of receipt of the relevant information, to the Member Country which has undergone the evaluation. The evaluation report should detail any findings which affect trade prospects. The Member Country which conducts the evaluation should clarify in detail any points of the evaluation on request.

In the event of a dispute between two Member Countries over the conduct or the conclusions of the evaluation of the *Veterinary Services*, the matter should be dealt with having regard to the procedures set out in Article 1.3.1.4.